

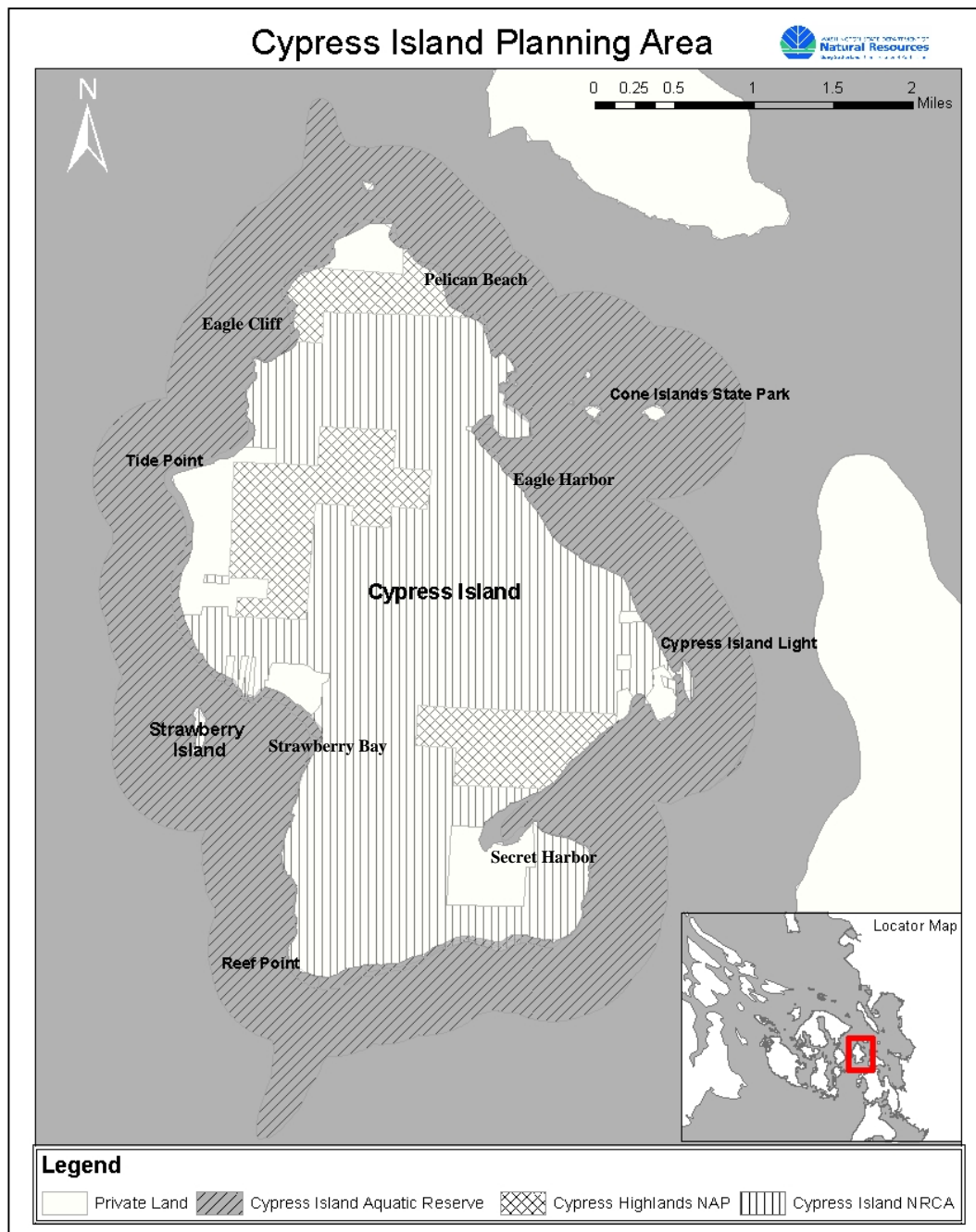
# Cypress Island Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA) and Proposed Cypress Island Aquatic Reserve

## Open House Meeting

Sponsored by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Thursday, November 3, 2005 - 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Seafarers Memorial Park Meeting Room, Anacortes, WA



# Welcome

## **What is tonight's meeting about?**

This meeting is about sharing information on the combined planning effort to update the Cypress Island Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA) Management Plan (June 1996) and develop a management plan for the proposed Cypress Island Aquatic Reserve. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff will be informing the public about the planning process and collecting your comments on the planning area.

## **I made it to the meeting, now what?**

This open house meeting is informal and intended to promote dialogue and information sharing with you about the Cypress Island NRCA and proposed aquatic reserve. Please visit the various listening posts and speak with DNR staff, your neighbors, and others that share your interest in the management of this site.

**DNR staff specifically wants to hear from you about what you consider to be important conservation and land use issues for the Cypress Island NRCA and surrounding aquatic environment.**

## **What is the goal of this project?**

DNR's goal is to develop a combined management plan that includes an update to the 1996 NRCA management plan and an aquatic reserve management plan for the state-owned aquatic lands of Cypress and Strawberry Islands. The plan will guide the long-term management of the site and emphasize a high priority for conservation, protecting natural systems, and low-impact public use.

The final management plan will include a specific set of management strategies that include restoration, public use, natural resources conservation, research, and general information about the Cypress Island site.

## **When will this project be completed?**

The final management plan is scheduled for completion by December 2006.

## **How do I get the most out of this meeting?**

This meeting venue is divided into a number of listening posts that you can visit. Each post has a different topic, or set of topics, about the Cypress Island NRCA and proposed aquatic reserve. DNR staff will be at each post to speak with you, share information, and take your comments.

### **Step 1: Start with the Greeting Post**

If you are reading this, you have already been to the Greeting Post and picked up your meeting packet. At the Greeting Post you have the option to sign-in as a participant. Please let us know if you want to be on the DNR mailing list to be informed of future meetings, have opportunities to review and comment, and receive updates. (Note: If you received an invitation to this meeting in the mail, you are already on the DNR mail list for this project).

### **Step 2: Visit the various information posts**

There are five information posts. Participants are encouraged to visit information posts located around the room, ask questions and share information with DNR staff. The posts include the following topics:

1. General information
2. Natural resource conservation
3. Public use
4. Restoration
5. Research

In addition, Dr. Paul Dinnel, from the Shannon Point Marine Center will be at the research post to share the results of recent research of deep rocky reef habitats and bottomfish in the planning area around Cypress Island.

### **Step 3: Provide your comments at each information post**

In order to make sure DNR staff are hearing you correctly, we have set up listening posts where participants can provide their comments. Your input can be recorded in a number of ways:

- Complete the comment worksheet included in this packet and depositing it at the central comment area tonight.
- Complete the comment worksheet included in this packet after the meeting and mail it to the address provided on the sheet.
- E-mail your comments to the address provided on the comment sheet.
- Share your comments with DNR staff at one of the listening posts.

### **Step 4. Stay informed about the progress**

All comments will be reviewed and retained in DNR's public records and considered as we develop a set of management strategies for the Cypress Island site. Comments will be posted on the DNR Aquatic Reserves Program web page ([www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/aqr/reserves/home](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/aqr/reserves/home)) under the "Cypress Island" section.

## **DNR's Management Objectives for Cypress Island**

DNR's management objectives for Cypress Island will be based on the goals and objectives of the Aquatic Reserves Program and the Natural Areas Program, research, and public input on the Cypress Island planning process.

### **Specific management objectives:**

1. Protect natural processes that promote region-wide biological diversity of the island's marine and terrestrial environments.
2. Avoid disruption of natural processes to ensure for the maintenance of natural conditions, native habitats, and native species diversity.
3. Restore and enhance those disturbed habitats and species.
4. Closely monitor public use and DNR activities for effects on natural, cultural, and scenic resources.
5. Locate public use in a manner that minimizes habitat fragmentation and interference with natural processes.

## Station 1: General Information

Cypress Island was selected to be an NRCA because:

- It is the largest relatively undeveloped island in the San Juan Islands, where extensive areas of undeveloped shoreline and uplands are becoming rare.
- The Island contains unusual geological characteristics, outstanding examples of native biological communities, critical habitat for federally protected species, and significant marine and cultural resources.

Within the NRCA boundary, 4,660 acres of high quality forest, wetland, and grassland communities are protected in the department-managed Natural Area Preserve (1,073 acres, managed under the Draft Cypress Highlands NAP Management Plan) and Natural Resources Conservation Area (3,587 acres, to be managed under this plan). The NRCA boundary also includes the tidelands adjacent to Cypress, Strawberry, and Cone islands.

### Management Goals and Objectives

- Goal One: Maintain, enhance, and restore ecological systems.
- Goal Two: Maintain exceptional scenic landscapes.
- Goal Three: Maintain habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) species.
- Goal Four: Provide opportunities for low-impact public use.
- Goal Five: Provide opportunities for outdoor environmental education.
- Goal Six: Identify and protect cultural resources in the NRCA.

Cypress Island is being considered as an aquatic reserve because the site represents what environmental reserves should be, with evidence of valued environmental resources, excellent upland conditions and opportunities for coordinating upland, intertidal (area within the range of the tide), and subtidal (areas below the tidal range that are always under water) management.

Environmental attributes of the site include:

- The connectivity of the reserve area to upland Natural Areas Program (NAP) and Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA) management units;
- The relatively large size of the reserve;
- The position between the San Juan Islands and the Strait of Georgia oceanographic regions; and
- The excellent condition of local aquatic habitat.

The objectives for establishing an environmental aquatic reserve include preservation, restoration, and enhancement of state-owned aquatic lands through conservation of ecological functions and conditions.

## Station 2: Natural Resource Conservation

The Cypress Island NRCA will be managed for the protection of its outstanding terrestrial and marine ecological systems, scenic value, cultural resources and habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive (TES) species.

DNR will place parcels acquired since 1996 into the Highly Sensitive, Minimally Sensitive, and Marine Areas categories in order to identify their corresponding classification and management.

The following species and habitat have been identified for conservation at the proposed Cypress Island Aquatic Reserve:

### **Species**

- Bald eagle
- Peregrine falcon
- Chinook salmon
- Groundfish
- Sea urchins

### **Habitat**

- Intertidal rocky reef habitat
- Subtidal rocky reef habitats
- Unconsolidated subtidal habitats
- Pocket beaches
- Mixed-coarse mixed-fine beaches
- Continuous and patchy stretches of kelp
- Continuous and patchy stretches of eelgrass

## Station 3: Public Use

To protect the natural characteristics and habitat quality on the NRCA, public use facilities are concentrated in a relatively small area of the Island. The public has access to a sample of each of the outstanding natural characteristics in the NRCA.

Known issues:

- Exponential growth of NRCA visitors, including large and/or commercial groups
  - Current use level is impacting:
    - NRCA resources
    - Quality of visitor experience
- Conflicts between casual NRCA visitors and commercial tour groups
- Proposals have included establishing a recreational visitor carrying capacity
  - What solutions do you envision for the casual visitor?
  - What solutions do you envision for the large and/or commercial tour groups?

The following public uses currently occur in the proposed aquatic reserve and will be addressed in the management plan

1. Public access for recreation at Pelican Beach and Cypress Head (other areas?)
2. Public mooring buoys at Eagle Harbor
3. Residential mooring buoys at Strawberry Bay
4. Commercial salmon aquaculture net pens in Secret Harbor

## Station 4: Restoration

Natural processes are the primary force in the restoration and maintenance of the Island's outstanding natural characteristics.

Active management is dedicated to restoring excessively disturbed and degraded areas and enhancing habitat.

Ongoing and upcoming restoration projects:

- Roads –Abandonment of Reef Point to Eagle Harbor Road; Strawberry Bay Road to Cypress Lake Trail; and Airfield Spur.
  - Planned - Reconstruct to a wide trail standard (48-inch tread width) allowing for easy pedestrian travel and ATV passage for administrative and emergency access.
  - In order to protect public resources, landowners statewide are required to maintain or abandon forest roads to Forest Practice Standards. Plans to accomplish this are required by December 2005.
- Old Airfield (officially closed to air traffic a decade ago)
  - Planned – Re-grade and/or re-vegetate runway to a more natural state. Provide helipad at the end of Airfield Spur Road for emergency access.
- Secret Harbor
  - Proposed – Demolish old school buildings; retain Deepwater Ranch house, shop/stable, and Macdonald Bunkhouse for future educational and administrative use.
  - Consider - restore wetland; create new public use area (campground, commercial group use area, human-powered craft use area, boating facility, etc.).

### **Restoration and other projects on the proposed state aquatic reserve**

- Removal of derelict creosote pilings
  - Inventory pilings.
  - Acquire funding for removal.



## **Station 5: Research**

The following research has been identified as important to the management of the Cypress Island NRCA. DNR will keep and update this list for reference when funding and requests for research opportunities arise.

### **ECOSYSTEMS**

- Effect of Island soils parent material on water and sediment chemistry of wetlands, streams, ponds and lakes and associated aquatic flora and fauna.
- Population inventories of wildlife, to include bats, forest interior birds and neotropical migrants, cavity nesters, raptors, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, larger mammals, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, butterflies and other insects.
- Nest predation in edge habitat along roads and trails.
- Snag density and snag use by wildlife.
- Community types and condition of marine areas surrounding the Island, including eelgrass and kelp beds, substrate, and species.
- Condition of salt marshes and effects of human use.
- Island vegetation to include overstory, understory woody and herbaceous species, mosses, lichen, and ferns; habitat associations of vegetation with various target wildlife species.
- Population inventories of wildlife, to include shorebirds, marine birds, forage fish, salmonids, bottomfish, mollusks, aquatic invertebrates, and marine mammals. Special interest in identifying aggregation, spawning, nesting or rearing areas.
- Characterization of carrying capacity of rocky-reef areas for rockfish and other reef associated species. Identify whether export of excess production occurs, and connections between reef sites within and outside the reserve.
- Identify timing and habits of seabird feeding aggregations. Compare health status (e.g., lipid content, survival, and reproductive success) of marine birds associated with Cypress Island to other areas.

### **EXOTIC SPECIES**

- Species list and mapped location of all exotic plants on the NRCA.
- Introduced aquatic flora and fauna in lakes and ponds and the effects of exotic fish on aquatic systems.

### **CATASTROPHIC CHANGE**

- Evaluate impacts and threats of increasing ship traffic through Rosario Strait, Bellingham Channel, and Guemes Channel on Cypress Island. Update emergency response plans as necessary.

## **Comment Sheet**

Please provide any comments you may have regarding the Cypress Island planning area on the front and back of this sheet. You can leave this sheet with your comments at the "Comment Table" or complete your comments later and mail them, by November 18, 2005, to:

David Palazzi, DNR-Aquatic Resources, P.O. Box 47027, Olympia, WA 98506

You can also e-mail comments to [aquaticreserve@wadnr.gov](mailto:aquaticreserve@wadnr.gov)